

2015 Oscars of the Month



January 2015: *Breanda Mason, Patient Administrative Service*

Breanda is my “Go-To” person in PAS! Although she is very busy, she always makes the time to assist me with whatever it is I am requesting from PAS (And always with a smile) ☺. What is prompting me to write this nomination is that through discussions I was having with the VISN HR office, it was discovered that a retroactive action needed to be entered in WebHR and processed before other necessary actions could be entered. I asked Breanda to do a specific action in WebHR at her earliest convenience so that other actions could be coded. It was literally three minutes later when she responded to me that the action was complete.



February 2015: *Aretina Rittenhouse, Prosthetic Service*

Today was one of those many days that Tina Rittenhouse went above and beyond to help a Veteran in need. A Veteran arrived in her office with mechanical problems with his electric chair. This amputee relies on his electric chair to remain independent despite his disability. She diligently attempted to contact the designated engineers for prosthetic issues (they were working on another emergent issue). Tina sought out a manual hospital wheelchair for him to make his VA appointment. While the veteran was at his appointment, she made every attempt to fix it herself but this repair was a job only an engineer could do. Eventually, engineering staff arrived and fixed the chair by the time the Veteran completed his appointments, and he thanked her repeatedly. Her diligence needs to be noted, and I nominate Tina for employee of the month!



March 2015: *Pauline Wille, Surgical Service*

I would like to nominate Pauline Wille for Oscar of the month. Pauline arrives early every day and is often the last to leave. She never refuses to see any patient. Frequently patients come up to her nail clinic without appointments and she never turns anyone away. If a patient comes in on the van for other appointments and she sees them in the waiting room and knows they have an appointment coming up she offers them their appointment that day to save a trip back. She is also always willing to help the schedulers whenever possible, and has helped out many times when an MSA calls in short notice. Her contributions to patient care, patient satisfaction, and the Surgery Department are substantial.



April 2015: *Steve Sheski, NESS, Housekeeping*

We would like to nominate Mr. Steve Sheski for Oscar of the Month consideration. Mr. Sheski's dedication to his work is second to none. He brings a positive personality and sense of humor/friendliness to everyone he encounters. He is the epitome of someone who strives to ensure a healing environment with his every action and word. Mr. Sheski's attention to detail is top-notch. He doesn't miss a single thing in our clinical and office areas. He is known by all to go the extra mile in the performance of his duties including cleaning blinds, vacuuming, and wiping down chairs even before we (staff) notice it has been completed. He is entirely dependable. He consistently asks if there is anything else he can do. When I asked the Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service staff for input I was overwhelmed with the final opinion: “Steve is a great example of Oscar of the Month!” (Note: Steve was nominated by another employee the same month for going above and beyond in his job).

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May 2015: *Karen Duerkop, RN, Hancock Outpatient Clinic*



Recently we had a patient who was approved for fee based cataract surgery. The non VA ophthalmologist had sent scripts for eye drops, but they had not arrived at the patient's home by Friday and they had to be started on Sunday in order to keep the scheduled surgery date. The eye drops were then ordered by the CBOC provider, but the patient lives in L'Anse and is homebound so had no way to pick them up. Karen lives in that area and offered to pick up the eye drops here in Houghton and drop them off at the patient's home in. She waited for 2 hours in Walmart on a Friday evening after working all day due to problems with the scripts, and then was unable to get into the patient's apartment building on Friday. She drove there again on Saturday and was able to deliver the much needed medications to the patient.

June 2015: *Sara Thoune, RN, Community Living Center*



We would like to recognize Sara Thoune for her role and contributions in making the Veteran's experience in the CLC an excellent one. Sara takes time to explain things to Veterans and their families in words that they can understand. We often observe her interacting with one of our Veterans who has dementia; she sits next to him, provides a comforting stroke of his arm, plays music for him and speaks gently to him reorienting him to his environment and surroundings. She is also a major resource for staff everything from clinical practice to computer issues. She helps every step of the way with charting and other computer tasks. Her guidance makes her co-workers feel more confident and competent. Please consider Sara for employee of the month.

July 2015: *Sally Klingelutz and Tonia Pierce, Human Resources*



I would like to bring to your attention the I CARE Core Values of two HR employees. Sally Klingelutz overheard Tonia Pierce talking on the phone to someone that could not process their thoughts to tell Tonia what they needed. Tonia noticed it was an extension from a VA facility. A while later the phone rang and Tonia noticed it was the same phone extension. Sally picked up the phone and began talking to the person on the other end. Again the person was confused. Sally was able to get the name of the person calling. When Sally finished the call she tracked down the phone extension to Tomah CLC. Sally called Tomah and talked to the nursing staff about the caller. The nursing staff at Tomah said they would take care of the caller. This is only one example of their dedication to the veterans and employees they serve every day.

August 2015: *Claire Waara, MSA, Primary Care*



I would like to nominate Claire Waara. Claire is the clerk/MSA for our PACT team, which is a full time job. In addition to this, she is also doing all the scheduling for the Dietitians and the clinics for the Diabetes Nurse Clinics and is doing the "in person" greeting of patients for a variety of issues patients "walk in" for. She does all of this cheerfully and I suspect patients gravitate to her because she is gracious in always trying to help them. In summary, she exemplifies what I think patients want in a "first face of VA."

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September 2015: *Eric Clawson, VA Police Service*



I would like to nominate Ofc. Eric Clawson for employee of the month. On 09/19/15 Eric was working the night shift for the police. He was notified that a CLC patient was missing his cell phone. None of the staff could locate the cell phone in the CLC. Eric decided to check the trash dumpster and after having Ofc. Aalto call the number they could hear the phone ringing in the dumpster. Eric went into the dumpster and located the cell phone. He had to move several bags of garbage to get to the phone. As a result he was forced to change his uniform. Although I believe many of the officers would have done the same thing, I believe it was above and beyond the call of duty.

October 2015: *Amber Baij, PT, Pharmacy Service*



We would like to recommend Amber Baij in pharmacy service for this award. Amber consistently shows an exceptional dedication to her job, veterans and fellow employees. She continually owns a problem from start to finish, often going above and beyond. She keeps Veterans informed when she is working on their medication issues. She asks coworkers if they need help and will help even when her available time is in short supply. She is always volunteering to pick up an extra shift due to people calling in sick or switching shifts with others in need. The work she does is done quietly with no attempts at self-promotion. Her helpfulness and positive attitude helps make the job much easier for veterans and fellow employees. We feel she deserves the recognition for all her dedication and commitment.

November 2015: *Al Williams, VA Police Service*



It was noted on the AOD log this weekend that a patient returned from the Milwaukee VA and had no way to get home from the Oscar G Johnson VAMC. He did not have a vehicle here and there was no one available to come and get him. Officer Al Williams paid for the taxi so the patient could get home. This act certainly demonstrates multiple values related to ICARE, particularly commitment to the care of Veterans and demonstrating respect for Veterans. The patient had returned from being at the Milwaukee VA and wanted to be able to return to his home. Officer Williams' act of kindness facilitated the Veterans return to his home.

December 2015 (Co-Oscar of the Month):

Tania Fuller-Hautamaki, RN, Nursing & Patient Care Service



Just want to let you know how much the Surgery Department has appreciated the help Tania Fuller-Hautamaki has provided us covering our clinics. Tania is always willing to help out on very short notice and does an exceptional job staffing the specialty clinics. Recently, due to unexpected leave, we would have had to close a clinic and reschedule all pts if Tania would not have helped out. She never refuses our requests for help, comes down with a positive attitude, provides competent compassionate care for our veterans, and is a pleasure to work with. She has been instrumental in keeping our clinics running while awaiting staffing replacements.

2015 Oscars of the Month



December 2015: (Co-Oscar of the Month):

I would like to nominate Sara Hansen RN on 4E for employee of the month. On multiple occasions Sara has rearranged her work schedule and personal life in order to come to work and care for our Veterans. Sara is also a chemotherapy certified nurse and has come into work on several occasions to assist in the Chemotherapy clinic. She is a part-time employee who has unselfishly picked up several tours in the chemotherapy clinic so that veterans can get their much needed treatments. There has been times where staffing is challenged on the 4E unit or the chemo clinic and Sara is called “on the spot” and willingly comes in. When census on the weekends becomes high, Sara will pick up hours to work when she is called at home. When her coworkers need certain days off, Sara willingly switches her tours to accommodate her coworkers needs. By Sara’s willingness to assist coworkers and Veterans, she has improved the unit’s spirits and Veterans’ care.

Interested in submitting an employee for the Oscar of the Month?

Any employee may submit a nomination for the **Oscar of the Month** by simply sending an email to Patti Menza in Human Resources with a description of what the employee did that is noteworthy for consideration. Each nominee is considered for 3 consecutive months, or until selected, whichever comes first.

Per Medical Center Memorandum 00-59, criteria considered for the nominee are:

- (1) Makes a special effort to assist a patient or another employee;
- (2) Is unusually helpful, courteous, friendly, and/or displays positive attitude toward patients, visitors, or employees;
- (3) Makes a special effort in a work-related crisis or emergency;
- (4) Significantly contributes to the provision of Veteran centered care and/or cultural transformation efforts in the CLC; and/or
- (5) Makes a significant contribution to ensure the quality of care and/or patient safety.